



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

## MORE CONCENTRATION IN HISTORY WORK

---

THOMAS HOWARD MACQUEARY  
Soldan High School, St. Louis, Missouri

---

The radical defect in much of our history teaching is its superficiality, its thinness. We are forced to spread out so thin—over so large a space—that the pupil gets a most inadequate idea of the subject. Worst of all he forms the *habit* of superficial study—a fatal habit which should be avoided at all hazards. Far better would it be to take a few periods and study them until the pupils really know them! It is absurd to assume that, in order to teach history, one must cover the entire field. On the contrary, history can be taught far more effectively by cutting out a block, so to speak, and concentrating attention upon that until the pupil masters the facts, and sees how events follow one another and how institutions are developed.

Where four years are given to history work, in the high school, it is comparatively easy to arrange the course satisfactorily to teacher and pupils, but while a number of schools offer four years of history, very few of the pupils actually give this much time to it. The vast majority get only two years of history, although a considerable number may, in certain schools, take three years. The question then is, How can we make a short course in history most profitable to the students? By covering less ground and concentrating attention on certain important periods. But what part of the world's history should be omitted from a short course? I feel more and more keenly every day that high-school pupils should be given more English and American and less ancient history than is given in most cases at present. If only two years can be given to history, then, give *half* of it, at least, to English and American history and the other half to European. If three years are devoted to history, then give three-sixths of it to English and American, two-sixths to European history, and one-sixth to ancient (Greek and Roman) history.

Suppose, however, we confine the short course in history to

European, English, and American history. How may it be taught most effectively? I answer—By selecting a few lines of work and a few periods and concentrating attention upon them until the pupil masters them. The mediaeval period, to which one term or semester is usually devoted, is perhaps the most difficult period to cover in the time allotted. The mass of details is so great, the lines of development overlap at so many points, the phenomena are so foreign to modern thought, that a rapid survey, such as we are forced to make, is simply bewildering. How shall we work through the labyrinth? By selecting three or four definite lines and pursuing them as we would the main-traveled roads through a wilderness, not allowing ourselves to wander into by-paths and get lost in the woods.

What are the main lines of development during the Middle Ages? Are they not four, viz., the history of the church, of the Holy Roman Empire, of France, and of England? If we should give, as I think we ought to give, an entire semester to the mediaeval history of England, our task would be greatly simplified.

Beginning, then, with the fall of the Roman Empire, we would take up, first, the reigns of Clovis and Charlemagne and study carefully their efforts to reconstruct the Roman Empire. And by the way, I believe that we should begin the study of mediaeval history with the barbarian invasions of the Roman Empire and not with the post-Carolingian period. Say what we will, these attacks upon the Roman Empire may be more properly regarded as the beginning of a new era in the world's history than the fall of Charlemagne's empire.

After the Treaty of Verdun (843 A.D.) it is comparatively easy to trace the history and political development of France on through the age of the great mayors of the palace, the Capetian monarchy, etc., down to the Reformation. It is a continuous, clearly defined process. On the other hand, the rise and growth of the Holy Roman Empire, the Investiture strife, the Hohenstaufen period, the Crusades, the rise of towns, the House of Hapsburg, the Renaissance, and the Reformation may be satisfactorily taught.

The mediaeval history of England begins, of course, with the Anglo-Saxon invasions and the overthrow of Roman civilization in Britain, and by separating English from Continental history, we may emphasize more strongly than is otherwise possible Alfred's reign, the Norman rule, the Plantagenet period, especially the development of Parliament, the remarkable economic changes of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the Hundred Years' War, the English Renaissance and Reformation.

The modern period, then, on the one hand, may be studied from the standpoint of French history, beginning with the religious wars of the seventeenth century, and running through the age of Louis XIV, Frederick the Great, the French Revolution, France, Germany, Austria, and Italy in the nineteenth century.

On the other hand, American history properly begins with the settlement of Jamestown, Plymouth, and Massachusetts Bay, and while one semester would be too short a period in which to do justice to the subject, we might, at least, study England in the seventeenth century, and trace American history down to the nineteenth century, if not to the Civil War.

By this process of elimination and concentration we might cover European and American history fairly well in four terms of a half-year each, the first term being devoted to the mediaeval history of Europe (the Continent), the second to England in the Middle Ages, the third to modern European (Continental) history, and the fourth to modern English and American history.